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Committees
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Business and Regulatory Reform VC
Families and Human Services VC
Government Operations
Health Policy

The Jacobs Report

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MICHIGAN EXPLORES BENEFIT CLEAN-UP

Following up on a concept developed by state Senator Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods), the Michigan Civil Service has begun an amnesty period to encourage state employees to remove ineligible dependents from state health plans. This week, Acting State Personnel Director Janet McClelland issued notice to state employees that the current open enrollment period would serve as an official amnesty period for those claiming benefits for ineligible dependents.

In October, a comprehensive audit will be conducted, requiring documentation for all claimed dependents. The audit will be conducted using existing state resources and with state employees.

Although exact figures aren't available at this time, the state expects to achieve significant savings.

"Programs like this audit will help Michigan get through its current fiscal situation," said Sen. Jacobs.

"Senator Jacobs' persistence in suggesting this approach was a significant factor in our proceeding with the amnesty and audit program," said David Fink, Director of the Office of State Employer.

AARP RELEASES LIST OF SCAMS

AARP is offering a free new brochure listing seven common frauds and scams, providing tips to consumers on how they can avoid becoming a victim of fraud.

"Consumers need to be aware that these common scams pop up regularly, like mushrooms after a storm," said Anita Salustro, AARP Michigan associate state director for Consumer Affairs. "When it comes to avoiding these scams, knowledge is power, and that's why AARP is making this brochure available to anyone who wants one."

The brochure, "The Top Frauds and Scams," is available at no charge by calling 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277), along with "Consumer Protection: A Guide to your Rights and Choices." Information is also available through the AARP website, www.aarp.org. "Top Frauds and Scams" describes common frauds and scams and tips on how to avoid them.

According to AARP, the seven deadly scams are:

- Internet Auctions – Though thousands of legitimate transactions take place on-line each day, sometimes goods purchased never arrive or are less valuable than promised.
- "Phishing" – Con artists look to gather personal information by asking consumers to "update" or "validate" their billing information, including credit card and Social Security numbers.

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- Foreign Money Offers – A “foreign government official” offers an opportunity to split a huge sum of money if he can just transfer funds to your bank account – and naturally, he needs your account information.
- Sweepstakes – Very common, this scam tells consumers they have won something, and they need only pay a fee for processing, taxes or delivery to claim their prize.
- Charity Fraud – This scam preys on the public’s generosity in giving to reputable charities by soliciting funds for disreputable or fraudulent ones.
- Foreign Lotteries – A call or letter tells consumers that they may have already won a big prize in a foreign lottery, obtainable merely by providing bank account or credit card information.
- Work at home – This scam offers great payouts for little work at home, telling consumers they need only pay up-front supply, training or materials charges – charges they rarely recoup.

BUDGET BREAK

No budget meetings took place this past week, but administration officials and legislative leaders will likely renew budget discussions on Monday, and at that time may decide if lawmakers will attempt to complete work on the budget during the week’s legislative session schedule.

Both chambers of the Legislature are slated for session on August 25, for what most people expect will be an attempt to complete action on the 2004-05 budget. Several budget conference committees have already been scheduled for that day, even without agreements on final budget numbers.

If compromise remains elusive, legislators now concede that final action on the budget could wait until after the Republican National Convention in New York City—which means September.

Although officials contend that they are close to finishing final budget details, they remain skeptical whether it can be completed next week.

ANTI-GAY CHALLENGE DROPPED

Forces looking to snuff out the constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage and domestic partner benefits are dropping their challenge to the nearly 500,000 signatures that supporters gathered to get the issue on the ballot.

“We thought it was worth looking into, but it wasn’t panning out,” said Chris Swope of the Coalition for a Fair Michigan.

Swope said lawyers are telling them to steer clear of pre-election legal challenges to focus on fighting the constitutional amendment in court if it passes in the General Election.

All Michigan legislation can be tracked at <http://www.legislature.michigan.gov/>.

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

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